



Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument

Update – March 2005

Last November, we hosted six public scoping meetings around north central Montana to discuss 12 existing oil and gas leases that lie (entirely or partially) within the monument.

This effort stemmed from a Montana Federal District Court ruling involving a suit that alleged the BLM did not fully comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act and the National Historic Preservation Act when it awarded three of the leases in 1999. The decision to award these three leases was based upon management guidance in the West HiLine Resource Management Plan. An additional nine leases in the monument were leased using the West HiLine in our decision process and we opted to include them in this scoping effort as well.

During these meetings we asked the public to provide information that would help create a range of alternatives and stipulations for these 12 leases to ensure the values for which the monument was designated are protected.

Sixty-three people attended these meetings. We received 5,700 letters, emails and comment forms (of which 5,571 were a variation of two form letters/emails). We identified 449 specific comments, which were divided into 30 different categories. The most frequently mentioned categories were management actions, fish and wildlife, oil and gas activities, oil and gas related impacts, wilderness study areas, roads and aircraft overflights.

A complete summary of these comments is available at our web site at www.mt.blm.gov/lido/um/MonumentRMP.htm. Copies can also be requested by contacting the Lewistown Field Office, P.O. Box 1160, Lewistown, MT 59457.

We are now using this information to develop a range of five alternatives and associated stipulations for these leases. These alternatives will range from continuing the current stipulations to prohibiting surface disturbance. These alternatives will be carried forward into the draft resource management plan for the monument.

Our planning team has continued meeting monthly and working on other portions of the management plan throughout the winter and we're currently on schedule to have the draft available for your review later this summer.

Sincerely,

Gary E. Slagel
Monument Manager